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The Revival and Adaptation of the French Forms of Verse by Dobson, Swinburne, and Gosse

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THE REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF THE FRENCH FORMS OF VERSE

By

DOBSON, SWINBURNE, AND GOSSE

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PREFACE

Anyone who reads English lyrical poetry even in a desultory way will undoubtedly become aware of the facts that certain verse forms were borrowed from France. After this realization, the reader's interest will lie not only in the spirit of the French fixed forms, but also in the structure, origin and favorite artists who used these forms as a medium of expression.

The purpose of this thesis is to discover what French forms certain writers brought into English poetry, how they chanced to bring them in and to what poetic use and purpose they adapted them.

Detailed acknowledgments cannot possible be made in this instance. Many volumes have been of service in the preparation of this study, and those specifically drawn upon are duly acknowledged in the proper places. But two volumes should be mentioned here as the cause of special obligation: Helen Louise Cohen's Lyric Forms From France and Brander Matthew's A Study of Versification.

Finally, acknowledgment is due to Doctor Thomas Whelan, professor of English at Marquette University, for his generous assistance and advice without which the compilation of this work would have been fruitless.

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

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INTRODUCTION

There are fixed verse forms of foreign growth which have taken root in English versification--most of them having been imported from France. Although none of them have been as successful as the sonnet, they give to the lyricist the same opportunity for working within prescribed bounds. They are fascinating because they appear to be difficult, and the overcoming of this difficulty is likely to give pleasure to the listener and delight to the artist. And each of them has possibilities of its own, now comic and now serious.

The purpose of this chapter is not primarily to trace the history of poetic forms. A quick backward glance at the history of the chief of the fixed forms is in order. For a detailed study of the slow development of these formal metric schemes the reader must be referred to a history of the forms--Helen Louise Cohen, Lyric Forms From France (Introduction, pages 3-92).

The troubadours artistically developed the verse in the south of France particularly in the province of Provence. The later French forms were a result of this development. This culture gradually became extinct in

a series of religious crusades; but the beginning of the poetic forms took root in northern France, especially under Charles d' Orleans and Francois Villon, and it was here that most of the forms were molded.

> "The four hundred and sixty troubadours whose names have come down to us, with their anonymous kindred whose poems also persist, wrote in many forms which have disappeared. Oldest of these were arranged in stanzas. From this grew the "canzo" with interlaced rhymes devoted to subjects of love and gallantry. The "sirvente" with short stanzas simply rhyming, and corresponding one to the other, treated seriously or satirically, of political and social subjects. The "tenso" was an elaborate and curious duel in versification, with the first duellist improvising the first stanza, and his opponent replying in an identical form; later stanzas continuing identical in form, as first one of the poets, and then the other, strove for mastery in verse. The "alba" a farewell at morning; the "serena", an evening song; the "pastorella", lauding pastoral subjects; the "breu-doble", a little form with three rhymes, two of which are repeated twice in three four-lined stanzas, and given once in a concluding couplet, and the third finishing each quatrain; the "retroensa", with a more extended refrain,--all of these are vanished from our modern practice. Only the most elaborate of all, the intricate "sestina" has survived in diluted favor." (1)

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1. Wood, Clement: The Craft of Poetry, p. 232-233.

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CHAPTER II

HISTORY AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE FRENCH FORMS

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HISTORY AND IDENTIFICATION OF THE FRENCH FORMS

This chapter will be devoted to a study of the French forms which have secured a definite place in our poetry. Of these imported forms the sestina is the oldest and should be considered first. The remaining forms of verse will be introduced in their proper order.

The chief theme in the sestina was illicit and hopeless love. It was originally composed without rime. Arnaut Daniel was the first to use this form. He was a Provencal poet of note. The sestina was brought into renewed activity during the latter half of the Sixteenth Century by Pontus de Tyrad and his admirer Barnabe Barnes, who lived in France as a youth.

The sestina is awkward and uninviting in form. It is so forced in its formality that it takes on an aspect of freakishness. It is a poem in six stanzas of six verses, with an envoy or conclusion of three verses. All lines are of the same length. The special feature of the form is the employment of end words in place of rime. The six end words of the first stanza are repeated in each of the others, but in a fixed order, different in each

stanza, so that no end-word may occur more than once in the same position in the stanza, and that the last end-word of a stanza may become the first end-word of the next stanza. There is an envoy of three lines, in which we find one half of the six words at the ends of the lines and the other half concealed in the middle. If we represent the end words of the first stanza by the first six letters of the alphabet the terminal word order will be illustrated in the following table:

a	f	c	e	d	b
b	a	f	c	b	e
c	e	d	a	f	d
d	b	a	f	e	c
e	d	e	b	c	f
f	c	b	d	a	e

b
d
f
e
c
a

Envoi at the middle:

b
d
f

Envoi at the end, either

a
c
e

or

e
c
a

One admires a poem written in a form so complex as this, more for its ingenuity than for its thought. It requires a poet of real facility to make a sestina that is anything more than a clever solution of a word puzzle.

> "But rimed or unrimed, picturesquely lyrical or realistically prosaic, the sestina is never likely to win favor in the ears of listeners whose native speech is English. Its arbitrary artificiality is too subtle; and the difficulty vanquished is not here an adequate reward." (2)

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2. Matthews, Brander: A Study of Versification, p. 196.

"Rizzio's Love Song" a poem of Swinburne's is an excellent example of the sestina.

Because of certain similarities in origin and formation the ballade, the ballade a double refrain, and the chant royal should be grouped together; and the triolet, the roundel, the rondel, the rondeau and the rondeau redoubled should be placed in a separate group.

The ballades and other forms began to appear in northern France. Thousands of them in manuscript form are now in the Royal French Library. A friend of Chaucer's, Eustache Deschamps, wrote more than a thousand ballades. Froissart, the chronicler, also wrote many and Villon is heralded as a noted ballade-maker.

Originally the term "ballade" was used to describe almost any kind of artistic dance-song regardless of the form or kind. Music often accompanied the earliest forms which were found in the romances of the late thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries. The envoy is absent in the earlier ballades. The works of Jehannot de Lescurel, a poet of the early fourteenth century, illustrates this fact. The ballade took about four centuries to develop from an indeterminate dance-song to a fixed verse form. It was in the "puys"

> ". . . . poetic guilds of the thirteenth century and later, that the ballade of three stanzas with common rhymes and a refrain, came to be diversified and complicated in line structure and rhyme. In the 'puys', too, the envoy, which had hitherto been a feature of several kinds of songs, became attached to the ballade, so that after the opening of the fourteenth century, a ballade, whether composed or in a 'puy' or not, almost inevitably contained

> a conventional address to the Prince in the first line of the envoy. These same 'puys' saw the development of the chant royal, and of other forms with envoy." (3)

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3. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p.10.

The structure of the ballade stanza was completed by the fourteenth century.

In the late Middle Ages the ballade became quite popular in France and remained in favor until the sixteenth century. The most engaging literary figures of the fifteenth century are Charles d'Orleans (1391-1465), the father of Louis XII, and Francois Villon (1431-1470), the first a member of the royal house, the second a vagabond. The ballade went through many phases from Machault to Moliere, a period of almost three hundred years.

> "As time went on, not only did it become diversified, but there accumulated gradually a fund of ballade ideas, which was steadily drawn on from the days of Lescurel and Deschamps down to the time of Pleiade. Ballades were occasionally grouped in sequences, and, more commonly still became a favorite ornament of the early religious and secular drama." (4)

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4. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 19.

After the fifteenth century, the interest of the French turned to the literature of classical antiquity and the ballade was not prominent again until Theodore de' Banville revived it in the nineteenth century.

In the late Middle Ages the ballade also had a certain vogue in England. Chaucer himself wrote at least sixteen genuine ballades. France produced ballades by the thousands whereas the output in England does not exceed two hundred. Lydgate used the form in the "Temple of Glas" and wrote ballades independent of his longer poems. Two Middle English collections of ballades are known, namely the series that, for many years went under the name of Charles de'Orleans and the translation by one Quixley of John Gower's "Traitié pour Essenpler les Amants Marietz."

In Middle English the rigor of the French form is relaxed. The ballade, as in fourteenth-century French, may or may not have an envoy. The envoy may be of fewer lines than the stanza or of the same number. Line structure varies in the French ballade while the Middle English had a line composed of ten syllables. In England the ballade vanished with the generation after Chaucer not to reappear there until 1873 when Austin Dobson and Edmund Gosse popularized it. In the years that have passed since they have continued to allure many lyricists of Great Britain. The ballade is more fitted

> "for themes where sentiment and humor disclose themselves in turn, like twins playing hide-and-seek." (5)

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5. Matthews, Brander: A Study of Versification, p. 161

There are two standard forms of the ballade. The shorter is more characteristic of the form and is more firmly entrenched in popular favor. The first consists of three eight-lined stanzas followed by a four-lined envoy, all on three rimes. Each of the stanzas, and the envoy close with a line called the refrain. The rhyme scheme for each stanza is

a
b
a
b
b
c
b
C

The capital C represents the refrain. The rhyme scheme for the envoy is

b
c
b
C

Once the length of the refrain was held to govern the length of the stanza. Thus an eight-syllabled refrain dictated an eight-lined stanza. But this puristic extremity is not universally followed. The second standard form of the ballade consists of stanzas of ten lines, usually of ten syllables each, as in the five-foot iambic pattern-- followed by an envoy of five lines. This form lacks the couplet which links the octave together in the middle. The regular rhyme scheme for each stanza is

a
b
a
b
b
c
c
d
c
D

the envoy being rhymed

c
c
d
c
D

An admirable example of the first standard form is Andrew Lang's "To Theocritus in Winter" and of the second standard form is Swinburne's "A Ballade of Francois Villon, Prince of All Ballade Makers."

The ballade is written in the trochaic, the dactylic and the mixed movements, but the iambic and anapestic movements are used most often. The meter commonest for the eight-lined ballade is the tetrameter and for the ten-lined the pentameter, but this is not absolute. Ballades in trimeter and even dimeter are not unusual, and Swinburne found delight in writing them in hexameter. The envoy, following a medieval convention, is addressed directly to the prince or king of dignitary in whose honor the ballade had been rimed. It

> "contains the gist of the whole matter and the same time must be written to be read not as an appendix but as a component part of the ballade. It must always come out with a ring that leaves

the spirit of the verse stamped on the reader's mind." (6)

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6. Winslow, Horatio: Rhymes and Meters, p. 58.

The themes of the ballads are varied. Sometimes they are satiric and comic, then there is a serious and stately type. However, most often the themes are light and delicate. The rhyme is also an important factor.

"M. Lemaitre is quoted by Andrew Lang as saying: '. . . The rime, and nothing but the rime, will whisper things unexpected and charming, things he never would have thought of but for her, things with strange and remote relations to each other, all united in the disorder of a dream. Nothing, indeed, is richer in suggestion than the strict laws of these difficult pieces; they force the fancy to wander afield, hunting high and low; .... '" (7)

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7. Andrews C.E.: The Writing and Reading of Verse, p. 251

The double ballade is merely a more extended ballade with six stanzas instead of three. Usually the envoy is omitted. There are usually eight lines forming the verses, though there are several examples with ten and one splendid example of eleven lines.

Because of the double difficulty of this form few writers have attempted it and it has gone almost out of favor. However, Swinburne's "Double Ballade of August" continues to be quoted.

Occassionally a type of ballade occurs with a double refrain. This has the same rhyme scheme as the ordinary ballade. One of these refrains occurs in the middle of each stanza, being repeated in its entirety as the fourth line of every verse and as the second line of the envoy, and the second being used as the final line of every stanza and of the envoy. The charm of the double ballade is in its skillful use of the repetition without letting it become monotonous. In order to avoid the sameness of tone, the two refrains represent a contrast in thought and feeling. The envoy is often omitted. The rhyme scheme of the ballade with the double refrain is

a
b
a
B
b
c
b
C

for each of the three stanzas, and

b
B
c
C

for the envoy, the capitals B and C indicating the two refrains. A widely quoted ballade of this type is Austin Dobson's "The Ballade of Prose and Rhyme".

The chant royal is generally accepted as the longest and most diginified form of the ballade group. It is one

in iambic pentameter." (9)

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9. Andrews, C.B.: The Writing and Reading of Verse, p. 255.

In spite of its difficulty, this form has found more favor than the double ballade to which it is related. With most of the poets, however, the chant royal begins as an example of skill and remains little more than a striking exhibition of power;

> "but the persistent man thrives on difficulty, and the product may be worth all the effort." (10)

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10. Wood, Clement: The Craft of Poetry, p. 254.

An admiral example of this form is Austin Dobson's "The Dance of Death".

The triolet is the earliest of the rondeau family to appear. The first ones known are in the "Cleomadès" of Adenèz-le-Roi, who wrote in the late thirteenth century. This early eight-line form was probably given the name of triolet because it was originally a three-part song. In the fifteenth century, some of the poets who wrote triolets were Jean Reguier, Octavien de Saint-Gelais, and in the sixteenth century, Michel d' Amboise and Francois Sagon. During the next two or three hundred years it came to be valued as a medium of effective po-

litical satire, and although there were lulls in its popularity, it grew in France until sometime during the seventeenth century. Although it was known earlier in English literature it attracted no attention until revived by Austin Dobson. Speaking at first in ten- syllabled lines, it dealt with grave subjects; but the last few centuries have seen its themes lighten, and its form shorten to eight-syllabled and even six-syllabled lines.

Of all forms the triolet is one of the neatest. It consists of eight lines, with two rhymes. The first line is repeated as the fourth lines. The first two lines reappear as the seventh and eighth. There are only five different lines in the whole form. The rhyme scheme is

A
B
a
A
a
b
A
B

with the repeated lines represented by the capitals A and B. The refrain comes in so hastily, and is so lengthy in comparison with the poem, that all the versifier's skill is needed to avoid monotony. Although the triolet is at its best when it is used for a single thrust of satire, it can also carry playful humor with a faint hint of sentiment.

> "It can be seen that the triolet is not adapted for any profound emotion; its best point lies in its grace and skillful turn of phrase. The best triolets are not only ingenious, but as one poet has put it 'nothing can be more playfully sly than this tiny trill of epigrammatic melody turning so simply upon its own axis.'" (11)

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11. Untermeyer, Louis: The Forms of Poetry, p. 93.

Austin Dobson's "Rose Leaves" is a successful example of the triolet.

The word rondel, which is the earlier form of the word rondeau means simply a song used as the accompaniment to a "ronde" or round dance. The rondel, arising in all probability in Provence, appears in the fourteenth century verse of northern France in the writings of Froissart, Deschamps, and others. Since the fourteenth century it has become a distinct form in itself due to the work of Charles d' Orleans. The rondel has two accepted forms in English, both of which are due to the example set by Dobson,

> "who adapted the French original to the requirements of our English tongue with the same certainty of touch that Horace revealed when he modified the Greek sapphic stanza to fit the needs of Latin." (12)

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12. Matthews, Brander: A Study of Versification, p. 150.

The rondel is more substantial than the triolet though it is closely related in restriction of rhyme and

in repetition of refrain. This form consists of fourteen lines on two rhymes, the first two lines reappearing as the seventh and eight, and for the final couplet. The other form of the rondel is exactly the same except that it consists of thirteen lines only, the final repetition of the second line as the fourteenth being discarded because this double repetition of the couplet refrain made the form unwieldy. The poem ends with repetition of the first line as the final line. The form used by d' Orleans has, as its rhyme and refrain scheme,

A
B
b

a
b
A
B

a
b
b
a
A
B

The more modern form follows:

A
B
b
a

a
b
A
B

a
b
b
a
A

Austin Dobson used this form very well. "The Wanderer", an example is worth while reading.

Charles d' Orleans is hailed as the early master of the roundel, just as the vagabond Villon is lauded as the prince of ballad-makers. The roundel was largely used in the fourteenth century. It is actually a cross between the rondeau and the triolet, being possibly more related to the latter since it repeats some of its lines in their entirety. The roundel is chiefly associated with the name of Swinburne due to his volume A Century of Roundels, containing a hundred assorted examples of the form, the line-length ranging from four to sixteen syllables. As used by Swinburne, the roundel consists of eleven lines, two of which are the briefer refrain lines. The refrain either consists of the opening word of line one or of half or some portion of that line; and, if it consists of more than one word, it is usually rhymed with the "b" rhyme sound in line two. The rhyme and refrain scheme is

a
b
a
R

b
a
b

a
b
a
R

Where the refrain rhymes, this could be phrased

a
b
a
B

b
a
b

a
b
a
B

This form has failed to delight other lyrists.

> "Perhaps the reason may be that the line is a little too long and too full for so light a thing, or, that since its inventor had composed five score lyrics in this mold of his own, he had exhausted all its possibilities. Of course, the failure of the roundel may have an even simpler explanation, ... that no other poet cared to venture on a rivalry with Swinburne in a field which that master of verse had fenced in for the exercise of his own surpassing metrical dexterity." (13)

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13. Matthews, Brander: A Study of Versification, p. 153.

The Rondeau had begun to appear in northern France as early as the ballades but the form was not stabilized until the seventeenth century when Voiture revived it and was hailed as its master. It became so popular in France during the reign of Louis XIV that writing the rondeau was as usual a polite accomplishment as sonneteering had been in the sixteenth century. The rondeau is, with the ballade, the most popular of the French forms. Closely related to the rondel, it has far more charm and adds a pert sprightliness found in none of the other

forms. The rondeau is a modification of the rondel form. It is written throughout on two rhymes, being composed of fifteen lines--thirteen of the full length, with two unrhymed refrains. The refrain usually consists of the first half of the first line, but is often restricted to the first word only. Its fifteen lines are grouped in three stanzas, the first of five lines, the second of three lines and the refrain, the third of five lines and the refrain. With the R representing the refrain the scheme then is

a
a
b
b
a

a
a
b
R

a
a
b
b
a
R

No word must be changed in the refrain although in certain parodies and burlesques on the rondeau, puns have been used with an effect that is both startling, original and amusing. It is interesting to note how much variety can be achieved by this graceful little model. Many of the rondeaus are full of an airy wit; others are frankly tender; still others, like Dobson's "In After Days" are serious and grave.

The rondeau redouble is not to be thought of as a double rondeau. It is twenty-five lines long. It was devised by Jean de là Fontaine (1624-1695). It has five quatrains, and a concluding stanza of four lines and a refrain, composed of the first half of line one. Moreover, the final lines of stanzas two, three, four and five, are in proper sequence the four lines of stanza one. The first four lines, therefore, act as a kind of text on which the rest of the poem is built. This is a form deserving more popularity than it has yet received. An adequate model of this form is "A Daughter of the North" by Gelett Burgess.

During the sixteenth century Jean Passerot is supposed to have invented the villanelle. In its early form it was a sort of shepherd's song, and ever since then it has been used almost entirely for pastoral subjects of idyllic effects.

> "The word villanelle, or villanesque was used toward the end of the sixteenth century to describe literary imitations of rustic songs." (14)

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14. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 72.

Though it is simple its structure is highly artificial. It is composed of nineteen lines arranged in five three-lined stanzas and an envoy, and has two rimes. Each stanza is rimed

a
b
a

and the envoy

a
b
a
a

The first and third lines of the first stanza are used as the refrain, alternating as the third line of each successive stanza and finally closing the envoy as a couplet. The refrain forms eight of the nineteen lines. It is written in short meters with iambic or anapestic movement. The villanelle, like the triolet, is not usually employed for serious effects. The form lends itself to a combination of quaintness and flippancy.

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CHAPTER III

AUSTIN DOBSON'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

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AUSTIN DOBSON'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

During the nineteenth century there was a desire on the part of Austin Dobson for a more rigid and disciplined meter and he independently at practically the same time as certain other poets seized upon the French forms of which Banville gave the precise rules in his Petite Trait.

Although these forms had been known earlier in English literature, they attracted no attention until they were revived by Austin Dobson, to whom, more than to any other poet, these imported fixed forms owe their vogue with our writers of verse.

Henry Austin Dobson was born at Plymouth, in 1840. He had the latter part of his elementary education in Strasbourg, then a French city, and was thus brought into direct contact with the literature that he always so much esteemed. Returning to England at the age of sixteen, he began work as a clerk in the Board of Trade, where Edmund Gosse was also employed. This post he held for almost fifth years, but always regarded it a a necessary means to a livelihood rather than to his true profession.

Until 1884 his work was largely in verse, thereafter in prose. He was a shy, nervous man, fastidious and even prudish in his tastes. He retired from business in 1901, and lived aloof from the turmoil of London in a congenial, intellectual world, enjoyed old books, old friends, old wine.

The poetic style he developed is as polished and graceful as the minuets of the century that he most admired. The crispness and delicacy of his verse make him a master--a master with more than special reference to that poetry copied after the style of the older French lyrics. It is interesting to note the reasons why Austin Dobson turned to the French forms as a medium of expression. Helen Louise Cohen makes an interesting statement:

> "It has been supposed that Dobson turned to the French forms of verse because Edmund Clarence Stedman had remarked in 'Victorian Poets' apropos of Dobson's earlier poems, that 'Such a poet, to hold the hearts he has won, not only must maintain his quality but strive to vary his style.'" (15)

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15. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 85.

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and

> ". . . Austin Dobson said in his note to me, 'I was attracted to the French forms because I was seeking to give a novel turn to the lighter kinds of verse which I had then been writing. Sometime between 1873 and 1877, I chanced on the "Odes Funambulesques" of Theodore de Banville, whose essays in this kind gave me the hint I wanted. I

tried most of the forms in the 'Proverbs in Porcelain' of 1877." (16)

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16. Ibid, p. 83.

It was Banville's book of Trente-six Ballades Joyeuses which moved Dobson to write The Prodigals and his example was followed at once by Andrew Lang and also after an interval by Swinburne.

We admire French forms for the grace which they display, but do not expect in them any revelation of deep poetic feeling. Mr. Austin Dobson has said of the forms:

> "What is moderately advanced for some of them (by the present writer at least), is that they may add a new charm of buoyancy--a lyric freshness--to amatory and familiar verse already too much condemned to faded measures and outworn cadences. Further, upon assumption that merely graceful or tuneful trifles or "jeux d' esprit!" (17)

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17. Dobson, Austin: Preface to Latter Day Lyrics.

We will appreciate more the exquisite facility with which Mr. Dobson handles these forms by quoting specific examples. The following are excellent examples of:

The Ballade:

THE BALLAD OF IMITATION

"If they hint, O musician, the piece that you played
  Is nought but a copy of Chopin or Spohr;
That the ballad you sing is but merely 'conveyed'
  From the stock of the Ames and the Purcells of yore;

That there's nothing, in short, in the words or the score
That is not as outworn as the 'Wandering Jew,'
Make answer--Beethoven could scarcely do more--
That the man who plants cabbages imitates, too!

If they tell you, Sir Artist, your light and your shade
Are simply 'adapted' from other men's lore;
That--plainly to speak of a 'spade' as a 'spade'--
You've 'stolen' your grouping from three or from four;
That (however the writer the truth may deplore),
'Twas Gainsborough painted <u>your</u> 'Little Boy Blue,'
Smile only serenely--though cut to the core--
For the man who plants cabbage imitates, too!

And you too, my Poet, be never dismayed
If they whisper your Epic--'Sir Eperond' Or'--
Is nothing but Tennyson thinly arrayed
In a tissue that's taken from Morris's store;
That no one, in fact, but a child could ignore
That you 'lift' or 'accommodate' all that you do;
Take heart--though your Pegasus' withers be sore--
For the man who plants cabbages imitates, too!" (18)

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18. <u>Victorian and Later Poets</u>, p. 896.

The Ballade à Double Refrain:

THE BALLADE OF PROSE AND RHYME

"When the roads are heavy with mire and rut,
In November fogs, in December snows,
When the North Wind howls, and the doors are shut,
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
But whenever a scent from the whitehorn blows,
And the jasmine-stars to the casement climb,
And a Rosalind-face at the lattice shows,
Then hey!-- for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

When the brain gets dry as an empty nut,
And the reason stands on its squarest toes,
When the mind (like a beard) has a "formal cut"
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
But whenever the May-blood stirs and glows
And the young year draws to the "golden prime",
And Sir Romeo sticks in his ear a rose,
Then hey!--for the ripple of laughing rhyme!

In a theme where the thoughts have a pedant strut
In a changing quarrel of "Ayes"and "Noes,"
In a starched procession of "If" and "But,"
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
But whenever a soft glance softer glows,
And the light hours dance to the trysting-time
And the secret is told "that no one knows,"
Then hey!--for the ripple of laughing rhyme!"

Envoy

In the work-a-day,--for its needs and woes
There is place and enough for the pains of prose;
But whenever the May-bells clash and chime,
Then hey!--for the ripple of laughing rhyme!" (19)

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19. Untermeyer, Louis: The Forms of Poetry, p. 49-50.

The Chant Royal

THE DANCE OF DEATH

"He is the despot's Despot. All must bide,
Later or soon, the message of his might;
Princes and potentates their heads must hide,
Touched by the awful siege of his right;
Beside the Kaiser he at eve doth wait
And pours a potion in his cup of state;
The stately Queen his bidding must obey;
No keen-eyed Cardinal shall him affray;
And to the Dame that wantoneth he saith--
'Let be, Sweet-heart, to junket and to play'
There is no King more terrible than Death.

The lusty Lord, rejoicing in his pride,
He draweth down; before the armèd Knight
With jangling bridle-rein he still doth ride;
He crosseth the strong Captain in the fight,
The Burgher grave he beckons from debate;
He hales the Abbot by his shaven pate,
Nor for the Abbess' wailing will delay;
No bawling Mendicant shall say him nay,
E'en to the pyx the Priest he followeth,
Nor can the Leech his chilling finger stay
There is no King more terrible than Death.

All things must bow to him. And woe betide
The Wine-bibber, the Roisterer by night;
Him the feast-master, many bouts defied,
Him 'twixt the pledging and the cup shall smite;
Woe to the lender at usurious rate,
The hard Rich Man, the hireling Advocate,
Woe to the Judge that selleth right for pay;
Woe to the Thief that like a beast of prey
With creeping tread the traveller harryeth:--
These, in their sin, the sudden sword shall slay.
There is no King more terrible than Death.

He hath no pity--nor will be denied.
When the low hearth is garnished and bright
Grimly he flingeth the dim portal wide,
And steals the Infant in the Mother's sight;
He hath no pity for the scorned of fate:--
He spares not Lazarus lying at the gate,
Nay, nor the Blind that stumbleth as he may;
Nay, the tired Ploughman, at the sinking ray,
In the last furrow feels an icy breath,
And knows a hand hath turned the team astray.
There is no King more terrible than Death.

He hath no pity, for the new-made Bride,
Blithe with the promise of her life's delight,
That wanders gladly by her Husband's side,
He with the clatter of his drum doth fright;
He scares the Virgin at the convent grate,
The Maid half-won, the Lover passionate;
He hath no grace for weakness and decay;
The tender Wife, the Widow bent and gray
The feeble Sire whose footsteps faltereth,--
All these he leadeth by the lonely way.
There is no King more terrible than Death.

Envoy

Youth, for whose ear and 'monishing of late,
I sang of prodigals and lost estate,
Have thou thy joy of living and be gay;
But know not less that there must come a day,
Aye, and perchance e'en now it hasteneth,
When thine own heart shall speak to thee and say,
There is no King more terrible than Death!" (20)

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20. Ibid, p. 53-54.

The Triolet:

TO ROSE

"In the school of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar;
O, they fish with all nets
In the school of Coquettes!
When her brooch she forgets
'Tis to show her new collar;
In the school of Coquettes
Madam Rose is a scholar." (21)

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21. Winslow: Rhymes and Meters, p. 61.

The Rondel:

WANDERER

Love comes back to his vacant dwelling--
The old, old, Love that we knew of yore!
We see him stand by the open door,
With his great eyes sad, and his bosom swelling.

He makes as though in our arms repelling,
He fain would lie as he lay before;
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling--
The old, old, Love that we knew of yore!

Oh, who shall help us from over-telling
That sweet forgotten, forbidden lore!
E'en as we doubt in our heart once more,
With a rush of tears to our eyelids welling,
Love comes back to his vacant dwelling." (22)

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22. Matthews, Brander: A Study of Versification, p. 151.

The Rondeau:

WITH PIPE AND FLUTE

"With pipe and flute and rustic Pan
Of old made music sweet for man;

And wonder hushed the warbling bird,
And closer drew the calm-eyed herd,--
The rolling river slowlier ran.

Ah! would,--oh! would, a little span,
Some air of Arcady could fan
This age of ours, too seldom stirred
With pipe and flute!

But now for gold we plot and plan;
And from Beersheba unto Dan
Appolo's self might pass unheard,
Or find night-jar's note preferred,--
Not so it fared when time began
With pipe and flute!" (23)

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23. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 328.

And the Villanelle:

ON A NANKIN PLATE

"'Oh me, but it might have been!
Was there ever so dismal a fate?'--
Quoth the little blue mandarin.

'Such a maid as was never seen!
She passed, though I cried to her 'Wait!--
Oh me, but it might have been!

'I cried, O my Flower, my Queen,
Be mine! 'Twas precipitate'--
Quoth the little blue mandarin--

'But then. . . she was just sixteen,
Long-eyed--as a lily straight--
Ah me, but it might have been!

As it was, from her polankeen,
She laughed--'You're a week too late!'
(Quoth the little blue mandarin.)

'That is why, in a mist of spleen,
I mourn on this Nankin Plate.
Ah me, but it might have been!'
Quoth the little blue mandarin." (24)

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24. Woods, George B.: Poetry of the Victorian Period, p.766

The Rondeau:

IN AFTER DAYS

"In after days when grasses high
O'er-top the stone where I shall lie,
   Though ill or well the world adjust
   My slender claim to honoured dust,
I shall not question or reply.

I shall not see the morning sky;
I shall not hear the night-wind sigh;
   I shall be mute, as all men must
         In after days!

But yet, now living, fain were I
That some one then should testify,
   Saying--'He held his pen in trust
   To Art, not serving shame or lust.'
Will none?--Then let my memory die." (23)

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23. Stephen, Beck and Snow: Victorian and Later Poets, p. 898.

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CHAPTER IV

SWINBURNE'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

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SWINBURNE'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

Another master of these forms was Algermon Charles Swinburne. He was born in London, April 5, 1877, the eldest son of Admiral Charles Henry Swinburne, and Lady Jane Henrietta, the daughter of the third Earl of Ashburnham. His grandfather was of good French stock.

> "Of Sir John Swinburne, his grandfather, whose life, he said, would better be worth writing than his own, Swinburne wrote to Edmund Clarence Stedman: 'Born and brought up in France, his father a naturalized Frenchman and his mother a lady of the house of Polignac (a quaint political relationship for me), my grandfather never left France till called away at twenty-five on the falling in of such English estates as confiscation had left to a family which in every Catholic rebellion from the days of my own Queen Mary to those of Charles Edward had given their blood like water and their lands like dust for the Stuarts'. . . . . 'He was the friend of the great Turner,' he continues, 'and of many lesser artists; I wish to God he had discovered Blake! ..... To the last (and he died at ninety-eight) he was far liker in appearance and manners to an old French nobleman (I have heard my mother remark it) than to any type of the average English gentleman.'" (24)

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24. Stephen, Beck, and Snow: Victorian and Later Poets, p. 675.

Swinburne was a queer-looking being with a pallid

face, large head, green eyes and a great cloud of flaming red hair.

He spent his childhood summers in Northumberland and winters in the Isle of Wight so that the ancestry of his rational as well as his physical life was of the sea. He studied at Eton and Oxford, where though not undistinguished in scholarship he took no degree. At Oxford he met Dante Gabriel Rossetti, who with a group of young Pre-Raphaelites, had come to the University to decorate the walls of the Union. Swinburne enjoyed his association with these young medievalists. He became acquainted with Italy and France by travel. Literature was his sole career. He spent his life secluded in friendships and studies and as a result an abundance of prose and verse has come forth unintermittently for nearly forty years.

England believed it saw Swinburne for what he really was when, in 1866, his "Poems and Ballades" appeared. Almost overnight he became notorious. It is quite evident that Swinburne was influenced by the circulation in London of Banville's "Trente-six Ballades Joyeuses" into writing ballades. He was also an ardent advocator of the other French forms and followed the rules which Banville gave in his "Petite Traitè". I have read some of Swinburne's letters and they are full of evidences of his interest in the lyric forms from France. Helen

Louise Cohen has something interesting to say:

> "When Swinburne reviewed Frederick Locker-Tompson's "Lyra Elegantiarum" he was particular to say 'We look in vain for a ballad or a roundel of Chaucer's . . . and it would have been of some little service to the common cause of good poetry and sound criticism if the duncery which regards or the impertinence which pretends to regard that beautiful form of verse (the ballade) as nothing better than a harmless exotic affectation of the present day or hour had been confronted with the fact that it is one of the numberless affectations or adoptions from foreign models which our language owes to the father of modern English poetry. If the old French ballade form accepted by Chaucer so long before it attained its highest possible perfection of tragic or comic excellence, of humorous or pathetic expression, under the incomparable and immitable touch of Villon is to be either patronized or rejected as an exotic of hot house growth and artificial blossom, so must be the couplet, the stanza, the sonnet, the quatrain and all other forms of rhyming verse in common use among English poets from Chaucer to Wordsworth. But it is useless to insist on such simple and palpable truths; for ignorance will never understand that knowledge is attainable and impotence will never admit ability may be competent. 'Do you suppose it is as easy to write a song as to write an epic?' said Bèranger to Lucien Bonaparte. Nor would it be as easy for a most magnanimous mouse of a Calibanic poeticule to write a ballade, a roundel, or a virelai, after the noble fashion of Chaucer as to gabble at any length like a thing most brutish in the blank and blatant jargon of epic or idyllic stultiloquence'." (25)

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25. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 86-87.

In the middle of January 1883 Swinburne began his Century of Roundels. By the end of March the manuscript was ready. The roundel is apparently Swinburne's development of the rondeau. He has shown of what flexi-

bility even such an artificial form is capable in the hands of a master of the technique of verse. Swinburne elaborated the sestinas. He was proud of his work in this form.

> "He wrote to Edmund Gosse in 1877 of his poem "The Complaint of Lisa." 'Certainly if you talk of metrical inventions or innovations there is one of the hardiest on record--a reduplicated inter-rhyming sestina (dodicina as Rossetti preferred to call it,) the twelve rhymes carried on even into the six-line envoy, as you will find if you look close for them in the fourth and tenth syllables of each line of it--or simply if you (having a poet's ear) read it out.' He preferred his sestina "I Saw My Soul At Rest" printed in Once A Week, January 6, 1872, to Rizzio's in Bothwell..... Speaking of the latter, he wrote to Edmund Gasse, 'and nobody shall tell me I didn't invent a rhyming sestina--a new variety which delighted Rossetti--both in English and French.'" (26)

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26. Ibid, p. 88.

Swinburne has been genuine, as only high genius can be, in all that he has done with the French forms. Superb examples of some of his work in these forms are the following:

The Sestina:

SESTINA

"I saw my soul at rest upon a day
As the bird sleeping in the nest of night,
Among soft leaves that give the starlight way
To touch its wings but not its eyes with light;
So that it knew as one in visions may,
And knew not as men waking, of delight.

This was the measure of my soul's delight;
It had no power of joy to fly by day,
Nor part in the large lordship of the light;
But in a secret moon-beholden way
Had all its will of dreams and pleasant night,
And all the love and life that sleepers may.

But such life's triumph as men waking may
It might not have to feed its faint delight
Between the stars by night and sun by day
Shut up with green leaves and a little light;
Because its way was a lost star's way.
A world's not wholly known of day or night.

All loves and dreams and sounds and gleams of night
Made it all music that such minstrels may,
And all they had they gave it of delight;
But in the full face of the fire of day
What place shall be for any starry light,
What part of heaven in all the wide sun's way?

Yet the soul wake not, sleeping by the way,
Watched as a nursling of the large-eyed night,
And sought no strength nor knowledge of the day,
Nor closer touch conclusive of delight,
Nor mightier joy nor truer than dreamers may,
Nor more of song than they, nor more of light.

For who sleeps once and sees the secret light
When by sleep shows the soul a fairer way
Between the rise and rest of day and night,
Shall care no more to fare as all men may,
But be his place of pain or of delight,
There shall he dwell, beholding night as day.

Song, have thy day and take thy fill of light
Before the night be fallen across thy way;
Sing while he may, man hath no long delight." (27)

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27. Ibid, p. 453-454.

The Ballade

A BALLAD OF DREAMLAND

"I hid my heart in a nest of roses,
Out of the sun's way, hidden apart;
In a softer bed than the soft white snow's is,
Under the roses I hid my heart.
Why would it sleep not? Why should it start,
When never a leaf of the rose-tree stirred?
What made sleep flutter his wings and part?
Only the song of a secret bird.

Lie still, I said, for the wind's wing closes,
And mild leaves muffle the keen sun's dart;
Lie still, for the wind on the warm seas dozes,
And the wind is unquieter yet than thou art.
Does a thought in thee still as a thorn's wound smart?
Does the fang still fret thee of hope deferred?
What bids the lips of thy sleep dispart?
Only the song of a secret bird.

The green land's name that a charm encloses,
It never was writ in the traveller's chart,
And sweet on its trees as the fruit that grows is,
It never was sold in the merchant's mart.
The swallows of dreams through its dim fields dart,
And sleep's are the tunes in its tree-tops heard,
No hound's note wakens the wildwood hart,
Only the song of a secret bird.

Envoi

In the world of Dreams I have chosen my part,
To sleep for a season and hear no word
Of true love's truth or of light love's art,
Only the song of a secret bird." (28)

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28. Ibid, p. 208-209.

The Double Ballade:

A DOUBLE BALLADE OF AUGUST

"All Afric, winged with death and fire,
Pants in our pleasant English air.
Each blade of grass is tense as wire,
And all the wood's loose trembling hair

Stark in the broad and breathless glare
Of hours whose touch wastes herb and tree,
This bright sharp death shines everywhere;
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Earth seems a corpse upon the pyre;
The sun, a scourge for slaves to bear.
All power to fear, all keen desire,
Lies dead as dreams of days that were
Before the new-born world lay bare
In heaven's wide eye, whereunder we
Lie breathless till the season spare:
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

Fierce hours, with ravening fangs that tire
On spirit and sense, divide and share
The throbs of thoughts that scarce forbear
Once mute immitable prayer
For cold perpetual sleep to be
Shed snowlike on the sense of care.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The dust of ways where men suspire,
Seems even the dust of death's dim lair.
But though the feverish days be dire
The sea-wind rears and cheers its fair
Blithe broods of babes that here and there
Make the sands laugh and glow for glee
With gladder flowers than gardens wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

The music dies not off the lyre
That lets no soul alive despair.
Sleep strikes not dumb the breathless choir
Of waves whose note bids sorrow spare.
As glad they sound, as fast they fare,
As when fate's word first set them free
And gave them light and night to wear.
Life yearns for solace toward the sea.

For there, though night and day conspire
To compass round with toil and snare
And changless whirl of change, whose gyre
Draws all things deathwards unaware,
The spirit of life they scourge and scare,
Wild waves that follow on waves that flee
Laugh, knowing that yet, though earth despair
Life yearns for solace toward the sea." (29)

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29. Ibid, p. 265-266.

The Triolet:

A MATCH

"If love were like the rose is,
And I were like the leaf,
Our lives would grow together
In sad or singing weather,
Blown fields or flowerful closes,
Green pleasure or gray grief;
If love were like the rose is,
And I were like the leaf.

If I were what the words are,
And love were like the tune,
With double sound and single
Delight our lips would mingle,
With kisses glad as birds are
That get sweet rain at noon;
If I were what the words are
And love were like the tune.

If you were life, my darling,
And I your love were death,
We'd shine and snow together
Ere March made sweet the weather
With daffodil and starling
And hours of fruitful breath;
If you were life my darling,
And I your love were death.

If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy,
We'd play for lives and seasons
With loving looks and treasons
And tears of night and morrow
And laughs of maid and boy;
If you were thrall to sorrow,
And I were page to joy.

If you were April's lady
And I were lord in May,
We'd throw with leaves for hours
And draw for days with flowers,
Till day like night were shady
And night were bright like day;
If you were April's lady,
And I were lord in May.

If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain,
We'd hunt down love together,
Pluck out his flying feather,
And teach his feet a measure,
And find his mouth a rein;
If you were queen of pleasure,
And I were king of pain." (30)

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30. Poems of Swinburne and Rossetti, p. 341.

The Roundel:

THE ROUNDEL

'The roundel is wrought as a ring or star-bright sphere
With craft of delight and with cunning of sound unsought,
That the heart of the hearer may smile if to pleasure his ear,
A roundel is wrought.

Its jewel of music is carven of all or of aught--
Love laughter or mourning--remembrance of rapture or fear--
That fashion may fancy to hang in the ear of thought.

As a bird's quick song runs round, and the hearts in us hear
Pause answer to pause, and again the same strain caught,
So moves the device whence, round as a pearl or tear,
A roundel is wrought." (31)

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31. Wood: The Craft of Poetry, p. 264.

ÉTUDE RÉALISTE

"A baby's feet, like sea-shells pink,
Might tempt, should heaven see meet,
An angel's lips to kiss, we think,
A baby's feet.

Like rose-hued sea-flowers toward the heat
They stretch and spread and wink
Their ten soft buds that part and meet.

No flower-bells that expand and shrink
Gleam half so heavenly sweet
As shine in life's untrodden brink
A baby's feet.

2

A baby's hands, like rosebuds furled
Whence yet no leaf expands,
Ope of you touch, though close upcurled,
A baby's hands.

Then, fast as warriors grip their brands
When battle's bolt is hurled,
They close, clenched hard like tightening bands.

No rosebuds yet by dawn impearled
Match, even in loveliest lands,
The sweetest flowers in all the world--
A baby's hands.

3

A baby's eyes, ere speech begin,
Ere lips learn words or sighs,
Bless all things bright enough to win
A baby's eyes.

Love, while the sweet thing laughs and lies,
And sleep flows out and in,
Sees perfect in them Paradise.

Their glance might cast out pain and sin,
Their speech make dumb the wise,
By mute glad godhead felt within
A baby's eyes." (32)

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32. Wood: Poetry of the Victorian Period, p. 730.

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CHAPTER V

EDMUND GOSSE'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

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EDMUND GOSSE'S REVIVAL AND ADAPTATION OF CERTAIN FRENCH FORMS

Edmund Gosse was also successful in spreading enthusiasm for the French forms of poetry and in adapting the forms to the requirements of English poetry. He was born in 1849 into a Calvanistic household, and remained of that faith until under the influence of Marlowe's "Hero and Leander" and other contacts with poetry, he revolted intellectually and became a part of the artistic world of which Swinburne was a member. As an assistant in the British Museum after 1867 and a translator for the Board of Trade beginning in 1875, he made many contacts with the writers of the time. He had a genius for friendship, a ready humor and sympathy, a nervous energy in conversation, that made him a welcome member of many literary groups. As Mr. Benson says of Edmund Gosse:

> "His graceful, melodious verse, flawless in construction, delicate in form does not anywhere show signs of passionate conviction or imperious stress; it has none of the 'perilous stuff that weighs upon the heart.' Intensity there is, but it is the intensity of enjoyment. Mr Gosse's poems are full of the spirit of the sunlit wood, the breezy headland, the fragrant garden-walks at dusk; they are full of the cheerful felicity that plays about the wholesome energies of life. . . . There is an equable lucidity about his expression. . . . There is nothing that can jar on the most sensitive reader either in feeling or expression. .

> He is preeminently a lyric poet, the singer of a swift and passing mood; he has none of the sustained energy of the epic poet, nor the penetrating psychology of the dramatist. . . Delicacy rather than intensity, that is the keynote of his lyrics."(33)

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33. Benson, A. C.: Essays, "The Poetry of Edmund Gosse" p. 295.

In 1877 Edmund Gosse published "A Plea For Certain Exotic Forms of Verse" in the Cornhill Magazine. In 1873, seven years after Swinburne had produced two rondeau variations which he called rondels, Gosse himself had composed seven slightly irregular rondeaus. Mr Gosse was responsible for the first example in English of the villanelle, "Wouldst Thou Not Be Content to Die" in 1874, and of a poem written in the form known as the chant royal.

Helen Louise Cohen inquired of Edmund Gosse about the revival of the forms. The following quotation is full of interesting material:

> "'You should note,' Gosse's letter ran, that 1876 is the date of the reintroduction of the ballade into English literature, Rossetti's translation from Villon being accidental, in the sense that he was attracted to the beauty of the old French poem without having perceived, or having attempted to retain, the character of the form. The reason for the simultaneous adoption of this beautiful form by a number of poets is difficult to trace. But I think it was connected with the circulation in London of certain copies of Banville's Trente-six Ballades Joyeuses. This was certainly the case with Swinburne, Lang and myself, and I believe with Dobson and Henley. But a desire for the support of a more rigid and disciplined metre was in the air, and we all independently and simultaneously seized upon the French forms of which Banville gave the precise rules in his Petit Traite. I cannot find

the book but I believe that a new addition of the Petit Traite was issued in 1876. I know that I wrote at that time a letter of adoring inquiry, and received in return a long letter of sympathy and advice from Théodore de Banville. But do not suppose that any of this interest in the 'forms' as we used to call them, dates back earlier than 1870 in England. Rossetti never sympathized with it at all." (34)

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34. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 82.

Charming specimens of Gosse's handiwork with these forms are the following:

The Sestina:

SESTINA

"In fair Provence, the land of lute and rose,
Arnaut, great master of the lore of love,
First wrought sestines to win his lady's heart,
Since she was deaf when simpler staves he sang,
And for her sake he broke the bonds of rhyme,
And in this subtler measure hid his woe.

'Harsh be my lines,' cried Arnaut, 'harsh the woe
My lady, that enthorn'd and cruel rose,
Inflicts on him that made her live in rhyme!'
But through the meter spake the voice of Love,
And like a wild-wood nightengale he sang
Who thought in crabbed lays to ease his heart.

It is not told if her untoward heart
Was melted by her poet's lyric woe,
Or if in vain so amorously he sang;
Perchance through cloud of dark conceits he rose
To nobler heights of philosophic love,
And crowned his later years with sterner rhyme.

This thing alone we know: the triple rhyme
Of him who bared his vast and passionate heart
To all the crossing flames of hate and love,
Wears in the midst of all its storm of woe,--
As some loud morn of March may bear a rose,--
The impress of a song that Arnaut sang.

'Smith of his mother-tongue,' the Frenchman sang
Of Lancelot and of Galahad, the rhyme
That beat so bloodlike at its core of rose,
It stirred the sweet Francesca's gentle heart
To take that kiss that brought her so much woe,
And sealed in fire her martyrdom of love.

And Dante, full of her immortal love,
Stayed his drear song, and softly, fondly sang
As though his voice broke with that weight of woe;
And to this day we think of Arnaut's rhyme
Whenever pity at the labouring heart
On fair Francesca's memory drops the rose.

Oh! sovereign Love, forgive this weaker rhyme!
The men of old who sang were great at heart,
Yet have we too known woe, and worn thy rose." (35)

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35. Ibid, p. 445-446.

The Ballade:

THÉODORE DE BANVILLE

Ballade

For the Funeral of the Last of the Joyous Poets

"One ballade more before we say good-night,
O dying Muse, one mournful ballade more!
Then let the new men fall to their delight,
The Impressionist, the Decadent, a score
Of other fresh fanatics, who adore
Quaint demons, and disdain thy golden shrine;
Oh! faded goddess, thou wert held divine
When we were young! But now each laurelled head
Has fallen, and fallen the ancient glorious line;
The last is gone, since Banville too is dead.

Peace, peace a moment, dolorous Ibsenite!
Pale Tolstoist, moaning from the Euxine shore!
Psychology, to dreamland take thy flight!
And, fell Heredity, forbear to pour
Drop after drop thy dose of hellebore,
For we look back tonight to ruddier wine
And gayer singing than these moans of thine!
Our ships were azure once, our roses red,
Our poets once were crowned with eglantine;
The last is gone, since Banville too is dead.

With flutes and lyres and many a lovely rite
  Through the mad woodland of our youth they bore
Verse, like pure ichor in a chrysolite,
  Secret yet splendid, and the world forswore,
  For one brief space, the mocking mask it wore.
Then failed, then fell those children of the vine,--
Sons of the sun,--and sank in slow decline;
  Pulse after pulse their radiant lives were shed;
To silence we their vocal names consign,
  The last is gone, since Banville too is dead.

Envoi

Prince-jeweller, whose facet-rhymes combine
All hues that glow, all rays that shift and shine,
  Farewell! thy song is sung, thy splendor fled.
No bards to Aganippe's wave incline;
  The last is gone, since Banville too is dead." (36)

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36. Ibid, p. 141-142.

The Chant Royal:

THE PRAISE OF DIONYSUS

"Behold, above the mountains there is light,
A streak of gold, a line of gathering fire,
And the dim East hath suddenly grown bright
With pale aerial flame, that drives up higher
The lurid mists that of the night aware
Breasted the dark ravines and coverts bare;
Behold, behold! the granite gates unclose
And down the vales a lyric people flows;
Who dance to music, and in dancing fling
Their frantic robes to every wind that blows,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

The pure luxuriance of their limb is white,
And flashes clearer as they draw the nigher,
Bathed in an air of infinite delight,
Smooth without wound of thorn or fleck of mire,
Borne up by songs as by a trumpets blare,
Leading the van to conquest, on they fare;
Feerless and bold, whoever comes or goes,
These shining cohorts of Bacchantes close,
Shouting and shouting till the mountains ring,
And forests grim forget their ancient woes,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

And youths are there for whom full many a night
Brought dreams of bliss, vague dreams that haunt and tire,
Who rose in their own ecstasy bedight,
And wandered forth through many a scourging briar,
And waited shivering in the icy air,
And wrapped the leopard-skin about them there,
Knowing, for all the bitter air that froze,
The time must come, that every poet knows,
When he shall rise and feel himself a king,
And follow, follow where the ivy grows,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

But oh! within the heart of this great flight,
Whose ivory arms hold up the golden lyre?
What form is this of more than mortal height?
What matchless beauty, what inspired ire!
The brindled panthers know the prize they bear,
And harmonize their steps with stately care,
Bent to the morning, like a living rose,
The immortal splendour of his face he shows,
And where he glances, leaf and flower and wing
Tremble with rapture, stirred in their repose,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing.

Envoi

Prince of the flute and ivy, all thy foes
Record the bounty that thy grace bestows,
But we, thy servants, to thy glory cling,
And with no frigid lips our songs compose,
And deathless praises to the vine-god sing." (37)

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37. Ibid, p. 275-276.

The Triolet:

TRIOLET, AFTER CATULLUS

"Happy, my life, the love you proffer,
Eternal as the gods above;
With such a wealth within my coffer,
Happy my life. The love your proffer,--
If your true heart sustains the offer,--
Will prove the Koh-i-noor of love;
Happy my life! The love you proffer,
Eternal as the gods above." (38)

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38. Bright & Miller: The Elements of English Versification p. 145.

The Rondel:

RONDEL

"Underneath this tablet rest,
Grasshopper by autumn slain,
Since thine airy summer nest
Shivers under storm and rain.

Freely let it be confessed
Death and slumber bring thee gain;
Spared from winter's fret and pain,
Underneath this tablet rest.

Myro found thee on the plain,
Bore thee in her lawny breast,
Reared this marble tomb amain
To receive so small a guest!
Underneath this tablet rest,
Grasshopper by autumn slain." (39)

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39. Cohen, Helen L.: Lyric Forms From France, p. 318.

The Rondeau:

LOVERS' QUARREL

"Beside the stream and in the adler shade,
Love sat with us one dreamy afternoon,
When nightengales and roses made up June,
And saw the red light and the amber fade
Under the canopy the willows made,
And watched the rising of the hollow moon,
And listened to the water's gentle tune,
And was as silent as she was, sweet maid,
Beside the stream.

Till with, "Farewell," he vanished from our sight,
And in the moonlit down the glade afar
His light wings glimmered like a falling star;
Then ah! She took the left path, I the right,
And now no more we sit by noon or night
Beside the stream." (40)

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40. Andrews, C. E.: The Writing and Reading of Verse, p. 258-259.

The Villanelle:

VILLANELLE

"Wouldst thou not be content to die
When low-hung fruit is hardly clinging,
And golden Autumn passes by?

Beneath this delicate rose-gray sky,
While sunset bells are faintly ringing,
Wouldst thou not be content to die?

For wintry webs of mist on high
Out of the muffled earth are springing,
And golden Autumn passes by.

O now when pleasures fade and fly
And Hope her southward flight is winging,
Wouldst thou not be content to die?

Lest Winter come, with wailing cry
His cruel icy bondage bringing,
When golden Autumn hath passed by.

And thou, with many a tear and sigh,
While life her wasted hand is wringing,
Shalt pray in vain for leave to die
When golden Autumn hath passed by." (41)

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41. Cohen, Helen L.: Lyric Forms From France, p. 415.

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CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION

"The Anglo Saxons were a hard drinking race whose bards chanted interminable battle songs to tables of uncritical, mead-filled heroes." (42)

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42. Winslow, Horatio: Rhymes and Meters, p.55.

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CONCLUSION

It is scarcely necessary to write a defense of the artificial French verse forms. Time is the greatest defense we have, and these forms have survived the heavy test of criticism for four decades or more. This thesis pretends to be nothing more than a simple compendium of the principal French forms which have been naturalized in the nineteenth century by such eminent Englishmen as Austin Dobson, Charles Algernon Swinburne and Edmund Gosse.

> "The Anglo Saxons were a hard drinking race whose bards chanted interminable battle songs to tables of uncritical, mead-filled heroes." (42)

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42. Winslow, Horatio: Rhymes and Meters, p.55.

As a result the English language was formed with many of the finer points of verse absent and bare especially of all fixed forms. It was this latter lack which these English artists sought to supply by imitating in English the sestina, ballade, double ballade, ballade à double refrain, chant royal, triolet, rondel, roundel, rondeau, rondeau redoubled and villanelle--arrangements of verse used

only at that time by the French and not very generally among them.

To call these the "French Forms" is today a bit inappropriate, because, since their introduction into English poetry by Austin Dobson they have been so widely used by our own poets that they have lost some of the exoticism and have been made our own. Dobson, Swinburne, and Gosse were masters of them and did some of their best work in these forms. In addition one might extend the list of poets who have been successful with them to include such names as William Ernest Henley, Dante Gabriel Rossetti, Thomas H. Daly, Don Marquis, Louis Untermeyer, John McCrae, Gilbert K. Chesterton, Clinton Scollard, Richard Le Gallienne, Brander Matthews, Carolyn Wells, Franklin P. Adams, Christopher Morley, Edward Anthony, Edwin Arlington Robinson, Arthur Guiterman.

In her Lyric Forms From France, Helen Louise Cohen traces in detail the origin and development of certain of these forms from the earliest type of refrain poetry, the dance song, to the complicated and perfected forms as we know them today. She suggests that in the majority of these forms every line of the song was alternated at first with a refrain, and that gradually the number of lines was increased, until finally certain of them were made to rhyme with the refrain itself. This soon found its way into the stanza, which had its arrangement ultimately established by very definite rules.

"What Dobson, Swinburne and Gosse intended has happened. The ballad and the rondeau, at least, are completely acclimated. They have their own moods and occasions, own aptitudes and ideas. Their themes range all the way from vulgar buffoonery and violent burlesque to delicate humours and glancing satire; from idle compliment to glowing passion. The ballade and the rondeau seemed to have established themselves as genuine poetic instrumentalities.

The triolet is dedicated particularly to the uses of English familiar verse. Only George Macdonald and Ernest Redford have turned it to a more serious account. The sestina remains an exotic. The villanelle appears to be growing in favor. Aldous Huxley, commenting on Dawson's use of the villanelle, writes 'Well handled, the form is capable of very great beauty.'

The forms are a perpetual invitation to the apprentice in metrics, and for that reason they tend to direct general attention to the mechanism of verse and hence to enhance the enjoyment of poetry." (43)

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43. Cohen, Helen Louise: Lyric Forms From France, p. 91.

It remains to say that the deeper purpose of these pages is the winning of the reader's interest in the structure as well as in the spirit of these artificial forms. Love of any poetry is increased by knowledge of its forms, its grammar, its laws of composition and harmony. It is hoped that this volume not only will foster a fuller appreciation of the French forms but will reveal the glories portrayed by Austin Dobson, Algernon Charles Swinburne, and Edmund Gosse in this magnificent verse.

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